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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: AOB for the meeting of the EPSCO Council of 17 October 2025:
Initiative for a European Day of Sign Languages
- *Information from Hungary*

Delegations will find attached information from Hungary on the above subject, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council of 17 October 2025 (Any Other Business item).

Initiative for a European Day of Sign Languages

The Government of Hungary, in collaboration with the European Union of the Deaf (EUD), is proposing to establish a dedicated **European Day of Sign Languages** with the suggested date of **17 June**. This day would serve as a major annual event to highlight the richness, diversity and impact of the 29 recognised European National Sign Languages (hereinafter: NSLs) in the European Union.

The suggested date, 17 June, holds unprecedented historical importance, as it marks the anniversary of the European Parliament Resolution on Sign Languages for Deaf People, adopted on this date in 1988. This resolution called for EU Member States to officially recognise their NSLs, thus becoming a pivotal moment in the advocacy for linguistic equality for the European deaf community. In December 2024 during the Hungarian Presidency, for the very first time in EU history, an official meeting of the Council of the European Union was chaired by using Hungarian Sign Language. It highlighted a milestone in showcasing the use of an EU NSL in the work of the Council.

The European Day of Sign Language aims to:

1. raise awareness about the diversity and importance of NSLs, enhancing the visibility of deaf communities within the EU;
2. promote the recognition of NSLs as full languages within the linguistic landscape of the EU and its Member States;
3. constitute a step forwards the officialization of the 29 NSLs as official languages within the EU, alongside the existing 24 spoken languages;
4. encourage policy measures that ensure the rights of deaf people to use NSLs in all areas of life, including employment, education, political participation, access to cultural life, interaction with public services;
5. celebrate deaf culture and the rich contributions of NSLs to Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity.

In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, the European Day of Sign Languages seeks to implement the rights of deaf people to use their NSLs in all spheres of life within the European Union and its Member States.

The establishment of the European Day of Sign Language is an essential step towards our long-term goal of ensuring that NSLs are fully recognised and integrated into the fabric of European society, in alignment with the EU's commitment to equality, linguistic diversity, and inclusion. It follows the International Day of Sign Languages celebrated on 23 September, to raise awareness about the linguistic rights and culture of deaf communities. The UN General Assembly officially recognized this day in December 2017 through its resolution A/RES/72/161. The day was initiated by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), supported by Antigua and Barbuda, and Hungary was the first EU Member State to back the initiative after which all EU Member States joined. It was first celebrated in 2018 and has actively been remembered since in several countries all over the world, besides Hungary, such as the USA, Germany, Canada, United Kingdom, India and Australia etc.

In addition, emphasizing the importance of NSLs is crucial for the independent living of many persons with disabilities across Europe and far beyond. And this very issue is at the heart of the corresponding Council conclusions expected to be approved by the Council.

We kindly request the Member States to support this initiative and we also ask the European Commission to consider the establishment of a dedicated European Day of Sign Languages as part of its effort to reinforce the “Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030”.